

Monday 18th and Tuesday 19th January

Church Cottage,
Little Weirwold,
Buckinghamshire,
BK54 1AS

Billeting Office,
Village Hall,
Little Weirwold,
Buckinghamshire,
BK65 3DS

23rd September 1939

To whom it may concern,

My name is Mr Tom Oakley and I am writing to you regarding the rumours of some city children being evacuated to our community. I am very concerned about the news that some evacuees may be being placed in the homes of Little Weirworld residents. Whilst I have the deepest sympathy. Whilst I have the deepest sympathy for them, I need to explain why my home would not be a suitable placement for a city evacuee.

Firstly, I am a very busy, overworked man with very little free time. My little cottage is situated on the church grounds, which is next to the village cemetery. The cemetery requires a large amount of upkeep. The grass, which grows very rapidly in summer, needs trimming almost every other day and this recent wetter weather causes unsightly weeds to sprout in between the graves. The weeds must be pulled out by hand, which makes this a very time-consuming activity for me. Due to the ornate design of many of the gravestones, they also require specialist cleaning to remove any moss or dirt on them without causing scratches or damage. You're probably thinking that an evacuee could help me in my duties. However, I am certain that a child, especially a city child, would not have the expertise, skills or respectfulness needed to work in the burial ground alongside me.

In addition, I feel I am not the most suitable adult to care for one of these evacuees. These children, whose lives have been affected by war in the past few months, will need sufficient comfort and love. Unfortunately, I am certainly not the man to offer that sort of household. Our village is full of caring mother-types, who would make the children feel much more secure than I ever could. Some men are cut out for that sort of thing. Others, like myself, leave that kind of thing to the women and sadly my wife is no longer with me. Surely, you wouldn't want to place a poor child in an environment that didn't offer them the empathy they needed.

Finally, I simply do not have room for a child in my home. I am a humble man with a modest cottage that has only two small bedrooms. The belongings in the second bedroom are that of my late son and under no circumstance will I have a city child ever touching them.

For all the reasons that I have mentioned, I would be very grateful if you would remove me from your list of potential guardians. I am a proud, patriotic man - who is willing to do anything to support my country - but it would be foolish to expect me to accommodate an evacuee child. Please feel free to contact me should I be of use to you in any other way to aid the war effort.

Yours faithfully,

Mr Tom Oakley